

COINS

Facts, fiction about lowly Lincoln cents

By Roger Boye

Here's a chance to find out how much you know about the Lincoln cent, just weeks before the federal government releases millions of zinc pennies coated with copper.

As usual, quiz answers are at the end, but no fair peeking.

1. When Uncle Sam first produced Lincoln pennies in 1909, many people complained bitterly. Why?

2. One of the rarest 20th-Century coins is the 1909-S VDB Lincoln cent. What does "VDB" mean?

3. Which president first suggested that the government depict Lincoln on the 1-cent coin, starting in 1909?

4. Why did the Treasury Department switch to a zinc-coated steel cent in 1943? [A] To use up extra steel supplies, [B] to save money in production costs, [C] to save copper for bullets needed in World War II or [D] all of these.

5. True or false: 1943 "steel cents" are major rarities, worth more than \$50 each.

6. Lincoln pennies made from 1944 to 1946 often are called "shell-case cents." Why?

7. True or false: Unlike Indian-head cents minted from 1859 to 1909, Lincoln cents carry the motto "In God We

Trust."

8. Two Lincoln cents are famous for having a few specimens with doubled letters and numbers on the "heads sides." What are the dates?

9. Why did Uncle Sam change the Lincoln cent's tails-side design in 1959, replacing two stalks of wheat with the Lincoln Memorial?

10. True or false: The likeness of Lincoln appears twice on every Lincoln cent minted since 1959.

ANSWERS

1. Lincoln was the first president to appear on a coin made for general circulation. Traditionalists thought that only allegorical figures—such as Miss Liberty—should be depicted on coinage. Also, the penny offended some surviving veterans of the Confederate Army.

2. They are the initials of the coin's designer, Victor D. Brenner. Mint workers put the initials on the tails side of a few 1909 cents.

3. Theodore Roosevelt, who wanted U.S. coins to be as beautiful as the ancient Greeks'.

4. C.

5. False. The coins are common among collectors; "fine condition" specimens sell for 20 cents or less.

6. They were made with metal from salvaged cartridge cases.

7. True.

8. 1955 and 1972. Both error coins sell for \$300 or more in uncirculated condition.

9. To mark the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

10. True. The statue of Lincoln is visible within the Lincoln Memorial on the tails side.